

THE FAIRFAX AREA AGENCY ON AGING PRESENTS CAREGIVER'S CORNER ONLINE FEBRUARY 2005

Caregiver's Corner Online is an electronic newsletter produced by the Fairfax Area Agency on Aging (AAA) with funding from the National Family Caregiver Support Program of the Older Americans Act. Our goal is to send you information to support you as a family caregiver for an older adult.

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1. MAINTAINING A HEALTHY BLOOD PRESSURE SUBMITTED BY SUE YOHE, CENTER NURSE, LEWINSVILLE ADULT DAY HEALTH CARE CENTER. Blood pressure is the force of blood against the walls of the arteries. Blood pressure varies throughout the day depending on our level of activity. When blood pressure stays elevated it is called hypertension. Hypertension is dangerous because it makes the heart work too hard and contributes to atherosclerosis (hardening of the arteries). It increases the risk of heart disease and stroke. Hypertension can result in other conditions, such as congestive heart failure, kidney disease, and blindness. A blood pressure of 140/90 mmHg or higher is considered high. If your blood pressure is between 120/80 mmHg and 139/89 mmHg, you have pre-hypertension. You don't have hypertension now but are likely to develop high blood pressure in the future unless healthy life style approaches are adopted. Both numbers in a blood pressure are important, but for people who are 50 or older, systolic pressure gives the most accurate diagnosis of hypertension. Systolic pressure is the top number in a blood pressure reading. It is considered high if it is 140 mmHg or above.

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Recommendations to Help Lower Your Blood Pressure:

- *Maintain a healthy weight.

- *Be physically active.

- *Follow a healthy eating plan. Consider "Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension," The DASH eating plan. The DASH plan is an eating program low in saturated fat, total fat and cholesterol; high in fruits, vegetables and low fat dairy products. More information regarding the DASH eating plan can be found at the Web site below.

- *Reduce sodium in your diet. Use spices, garlic and onions to add flavor to your meals without the added sodium.

- *Drink alcohol in moderation - one drink per day for women, two drinks per day for men.

Take medications as prescribed - if you take medication for hypertension, you need to follow the lifestyle changes mentioned above.

- *Follow up with your primary care physician for medication and blood pressure monitoring and evaluation.

Resource: "Your Guide to Lowering Blood Pressure"

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

Web site: www.nhlbi.nih.gov

2. ANNOUNCING "HAND IN HAND: SHARING THE LESSONS OF DEMENTIA CARE" -- TUESDAYS, 7:00 TO 9:00 P.M., MARCH 15 THROUGH APRIL 19, 2005, AT ALZHEIMER'S FAMILY DAY CENTER (AFDC). This six-week series of 2-hour workshops will give caregivers T.I.P.S. (Tools, Ideas and Practical Steps) they can use to manage the everyday challenges of caring for a loved one with dementia. While there are hundreds of books on the market about dementia care, there is no substitute for teaching caregivers face to face. Alzheimer's Family Day Center's (AFDC) unique approach to caregiver education gives students the opportunity to work hand-in-hand with members of our professional staff during an interactive observation session at our dementia-specific adult day center. We have no doubt that the best way to support caregivers is to show them the way.

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****3/15/05** First Things First: An Overview of Dementia. "Why do you keep asking me that?" "Where are you going?" "I don't understand what you're trying to say." Does this sound familiar? Put your hand in ours as we explore the day-to-day world of dementia and its challenges. This introduction to our series will include frank discussions of what caregivers can expect and an overview of the practical solutions we'll be offering throughout the course.

****3/22/05** Talking the Talk: Communication At Its Best. Communication is the key to managing behavior, reducing frustrations and increasing insight. Learn our tried and true keys to communicating effectively: Task Breakdown, One Voice, Body Language, and Change Face.

****3/29/05** Role Reversal: Personal Care for Your Loved One. Providing personal care for someone with dementia can be stressful for all involved. We'll share strategies to ease the awkwardness of assisting with eating, dressing and bathroom care.

****4/5/05** No Place Like Home: Managing the Home Environment. Minor as well as major modifications to the home environment can make life easier for the whole household. A living solutions expert will present ways to make your home a safe and viable place for your loved one through the use of colors, lighting, furnishings and innovative equipment.

****4/12/05** Food for Thought: Maximizing Mealtime. One of the most important yet challenging aspects of dementia care is proper nutrition for the whole family. Guest Chef, Mike Herbert of Nutritionally Yours will provide eating and dining tips as well as demonstrate simple meals that are nutritious, easy to chew and swallow, and can be used with utensils or as finger foods. We will also explore the social challenges of dining in or outside of the home.

****4/19/05** Putting it All Together: Lessons Learned. Using the skills gained from the course, students will have the opportunity to create a realistic daily schedule that incorporates the interests of the whole family while adapting to changing abilities and situations.

****Caregiving in Action (Dates vary).** During the interactive observation session at our center, our program staff will coach caregivers through real-life scenarios and share knowledge acquired over twenty years of caring for the day-to-day needs of our participants.

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This course includes: six 2-hour sessions of classroom instruction with Susan Stone, Outreach Coordinator, and guest experts; one interactive observation session at our adult day center; and a copy of Caregiving at a Glance, our nationally recognized fingertip guide for caregivers, which will be used as the course text.

Registration Deadline: March 8, 2005

Cost -- \$225. Please make checks payable to Alzheimer's Family Day Center and write "Lessons" in the memo box. Mail check to: AFDC 2812 Old Lee Highway, Suite 210, Fairfax, VA 22031.

Contact Information:

Phone: (703) 204-4664

Fax: (703) 204-0509

Email: AFDC@alzheimersfdc.org

3. UPCOMING CAREGIVER SEMINARS. The Spring 2005 series of Caregiver Seminars sponsored by the Fairfax Caregiver Seminar Consortium (FCSC) is almost ready to be released and will begin in April. Details will appear in the March edition of Caregiver's Corner Online.

4. WOULD YOU BE WILLING TO SUBMIT A STORY FOR CAREGIVER CHRONICLES IF SOMEONE WROTE IT FOR YOU? We realize that many of you are juggling a multitude of tasks and don't have time to write down your experiences. We are fortunate to have a wonderful student intern with us this spring who would be glad to assist. If you have a story to share or a question to ask about your caregiving experiences that you feel would be of interest/benefit to others, please contact beth.hershner@fairfaxcounty.gov. We reserve the right to determine which articles/questions will be published and to edit them for space. We look forward to hearing from you.

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5. VIRGINIA CAREGIVERS GRANT PROGRAM IS BACK! The Virginia Caregivers Grant Program provides annual grants of up to \$500 to caregivers who provide unpaid care to a needy relative. Grants are awarded for care provided for at least six months of the previous calendar year. The caregiver and person receiving care must be related by blood, marriage, or adoption and reside in Virginia. The caregiver's annual income cannot be more than \$50,000. The Virginia Department of Social Services will only accept applications between February 1 and May 1 of each year. Applications postmarked after May 1 will be disqualified. To receive a copy of an application or for more information, please contact the Fairfax Area Agency on Aging at 703-324-5485. Applications can also be downloaded from this Web site:
www.dss.state.va.us/family/as/caregivegrant.html.

6. PREVIOUS EDITIONS OF CAREGIVER'S CORNER ONLINE NEWSLETTER ARE NOW AVAILABLE. Current and past editions of the Caregiver's Corner Online newsletter (August through January 2005) are available online at
http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/service/aaa/caregivers_corner_nl.htm.

Please note that these items are included for informational purposes only and do not imply endorsement by the Fairfax Area Agency on Aging or Fairfax County Government.

For further information, please contact an Aging Information Specialist at the Fairfax Area Agency on Aging (telephone: 703-324-5411; TTY 703-449-1186; or e-mail fairfax_aaa@fairfaxcounty.gov) Visit our Web site at
www.fairfaxcounty.gov/service/aaa.
